



HEALTHY
CHILDREN
PROJECT

Learning Disabilities
Association of Michigan

Healthy Planet • Healthy Minds • Healthy Future

To: Chair Rebekah Warren and Members
House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment
From: Jackie D. Igafo-Te'o, Community Liaison
Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan's Healthy Children Project
Re: Statement in Support of HB 4699 to Protect Children from Deca-BDE
Date: December 10, 2009

On behalf of the Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan's Healthy Children Project, I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 4699 to ban the use of the chemical flame retardant, deca-BDE, in TV's, computers, mattresses, and residential furniture.

Learning and developmental disabilities influence the quality of life for affected children and their families, and also impose a heavy financial burden on the state through required Special Education, increased healthcare costs, lost work time for parents, and a life-long loss of work productivity for severely affected children.

The incidence of learning and developmental disabilities has been rising rapidly. In Michigan, 15% of all public school students require Special Education programs and services. Scientific evidence has demonstrated that some chemicals, including deca-BDE, can cause learning and developmental disorders. We must not expose our children to toxicants that we know or suspect can harm their vulnerable, developing brains and bodies.

Developing children are more susceptible to toxic exposures than adults. Tests of umbilical cord blood have found over 200 toxic chemicals known to cause cancer or other damage. When certain exposures occur at certain times, sometimes even at very low doses, the development of children's brains, other organs, and reproductive, hormonal, and immune systems can be permanently altered — even though that same exposure may have only temporary or even no discernable effect in adults.

In addition, pound for pound, children eat, drink, and breathe 2 ½ times more than adults. And, their normal behavior of living close to the floor and putting objects and their own hands into their mouths, assures that infants and young children ingest more environmental contaminants from soil, house dust, and household products.

Healthy Children Project, c/o LDA of Michigan, 200 Museum Dr. Ste. 101, Lansing, Michigan 48933
For more information on the Healthy Children Project, visit
<http://www.ldaofmichigan.org/healthychild.htm>
For more information on our e-Newsletter, visit <http://www.ldaofmichigan.org/healthychildnews.htm>



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Children's brains and bodies continue to develop and to be vulnerable to the effects of toxic chemicals long after birth. Body burden studies have documented that we all contain hundreds of toxic chemicals at any given moment and that they can interact with our unique genetic predispositions making their damage hard to pinpoint and predict.

PBDE residues—particularly highly brominated PBDEs such as deca-BDE—have been found consistently in tissue samples of both new mothers and their newborn infants, including in the mother's breast milk. Ingestion of contaminated milk is one of the two major routes of PBDE exposure in children, and there are concerns about the high concentrations ingested given the size and susceptibility of newborns. This trend has been found to occur around the globe, though North American women have been found to have the greatest average body burden of PBDEs.

Safer alternatives are available and in use. In an effort to educate families on ways to protect their children from toxic substances at home and in the community, we produced the booklet "Clean and Green: Your Healthy Home & Family," which contains additional information on flame retardants (*for more information, see <http://www.ldaofmichigan.org/cleanandgreen.pdf> pages 16-17*).

Children rely on adults to keep them safe from harm. Therefore, it is up to us to do everything we can to keep them safe and to minimize their exposures to toxics.

HB 4699 is important legislation that will help protect children from needless exposures to this persistent, toxic chemical.

Thank you.

Jackie D. Igafo-Te'o, Community Liaison
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